

An Artilleryman in a Joint Assault Signal Company

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AUTHOR'S NOTE

In the past two years a considerable number of Artillery officers have found themselves suddenly plunged into that bewildering tangle of military and naval objectives, a JASCO. Their new duties usually come as a complete surprise. May this description of a Joint Assault Signal Company, stressing particularly its Shore Fire Control component, help familiarize Artillerymen with the methods of conducting naval gunfire in an amphibious operation.

The name *Joint Assault Signal Company* is derived from the old *Signal Company, Special* designation. When Shore Fire Control Teams and Air Liaison Teams were added to these companies their titles acquired the "Joint Assault" prefix.

These varying components of a JASCO were put together in one organization because they are all concerned primarily with the assault phases of landing operations. Although the various teams comprising a JASCO have little to do with each other during an actual operation, the theory that they would all enter and leave the scene of action at about the same time made their amalgamation into one organization for administration a logical move.

ORGANIZATION

A JASCO consists of a headquarters group, nine Shore Fire Control Parties, thirteen Air Liaison Teams, and ten Shore Beach Teams. One JASCO works with each division in an amphibious operation.

Air Liaison Teams (each headed by an Air Corps officer) provide liaison between the commanders of the infantry units at battalion, regiment, and division levels, and the naval aircraft to be used in support of the landing forces.

Shore Beach Teams (commanded by Signal Corps officers) provide communications on the beaches for each assault battalion. The tenth team supplements their installations during the division phase. These communications teams work under the Engineer units which control each beach.

Various divisions have somewhat modified the composition and use of the Air Liaison and Shore Beach Teams to meet special attack situations, but these permutations need not enter into a discussion designed primarily for artillerymen.

Each Shore Fire Control Party consists of one Artillery officer, one Naval officer, one scout, two radio operators, and two driver-linemen. Each party is assigned to work with an infantry battalion, with which it is loaded prior to an amphibious attack. The Artillery officer acts in general just as would an artillery forward observer except that he directs the fire of destroyers or larger ships instead of land-based guns. The Naval officer acts much as would an Artillery liaison officer with an infantry battalion.

Since two officers and five enlisted men are all that are

available for both the FO party and the Liaison party, it becomes immediately apparent that the T/O for Shore Fire Control is inadequate. In actual operation the lacks are made up in most cases by borrowing men from the infantry, from the JASCO headquarters personnel, or from such of the JASCO Shore Beach Teams as the division does not plan to use on that particular landing. At any rate each part of the Shore Fire Control Team must have sufficient personnel to operate efficiently, and to operate on foot if necessary.

One team organization that has been found to be satisfactory in actual operation is: (1) Artillery officer's team: scout, 2 radio operators, driver, lineman; (2) Naval officer's team: 2 radio operators, driver, lineman. This is a minimum which may have to be increased in some cases. For instance, if vehicles and drivers are to be left on board ship during the early part of an assault three men are insufficient for the radio load, it being necessary for the spotter (Artillery officer) and scout to remain relatively unencumbered.

Most (if not all) units interested in training Shore Fire Control Parties call for a Naval Liaison Officer and party with each regiment and a Division Naval Gunfire Officer with party at the division CP. The JASCO table of organization makes no provision for these teams, so they too must be improvised from the sources previously mentioned.

Naval officers for the regimental jobs are usually assigned prior to an operation from an officers' pool used for this purpose. If they do not arrive the Naval Liaison Officers of the reserve battalions may undertake the regimental duties, or liaison at regimental levels may be abandoned.

The Division Naval Gunfire Officer is usually assigned to this work from among the Artillery officers of the division. There would be decided benefits if this officer were permanently assigned to the JASCO. In one instance, where the CO of the JASCO happens to be an artillery officer, he has acted very adequately as Division Naval Gunfire Officer. In most cases, however, this cannot be done, as the CO of the JASCO is generally a Signal Corps officer.

These T/O difficulties have been touched on at considerable length because they crop up frequently in the actual operation of Shore Fire Control Parties. If they are better understood by all branches the borrowings and improvisations necessary to overcome them will be borne more easily.

In some divisions the work of the Shore Fire Control Parties is put by the division commander directly under DivArty. Hence JASCO's methods of operation and difficulties are important to many Artillerymen not otherwise directly concerned therein.

EQUIPMENT

Each battalion Gunfire Spotter's Team is equipped with a ¼-ton vehicle and trailer, a 694 or 284 radio, 536s, light



wire, phones, etc. The equipment is complete and adequate. The battalion Naval Liaison Team is similarly equipped. The JASCO T/E provides none for the Regimental Naval Liaison Parties nor for the Division Naval Gunfire Officer's Party. Although, with the cooperation of the Division to which the JASCO is attached, there is little difficulty in lining up the necessities for these parties, it would be helpful if they were provided for in the T/E.

DUTIES OF SPOTTER AND TEAM

The primary duty of the Naval Gunfire Spotter is to direct the fire of supporting destroyers, cruisers, and battleships during the landing phases of an amphibious assault. When the artillery is well established ashore Naval gunfire begins to play a less vital part. It may well continue to be used as long as the front lines are within the ships' range, however.

All types of fire may be delivered by the ships: call fire on targets of opportunity, harassing fire, illumination by star shells, etc. While the flat trajectory of naval guns presents some problems, this is offset by the easy maneuverability of one's supporting guns. The firing ships may be so located as to outflank defilade and to permit a line of fire parallel to the front lines. This latter point is particularly important, as naval gunfire is very accurate for deflection but has considerably larger range dispersion than artillery.

The Naval Gunfire Spotter, then, acts as a battalion Forward Observer, transmitting his firing instructions by radio directly to the firing ship assigned to support his battalion. If additional fire is needed or if heavier guns are required he may ask for this through the Regimental Naval Liaison Officer or the Division Naval Gunfire Officer.

FIRE COMMANDS

The commands to be used are outlined for both the ships and the Gunfire Spotter in an official Fire Control Code. Only a brief summary of methods will be given here.

Initial commands must locate the target by map coordinates. Typical opening would be (1) "Target at ———", (2) Enemy gun position, (3) Close supporting fire, (4) Commence firing immediately." (1) All initial missions start with "Target at" or "New Target." The latter is used when a shift from the previous target is to be made. (2) A brief description of the type of target is given. (3) All fire is called "close supporting" or "deep

supporting." (There seems no real use for this distinction, but it's in "the book" and may help to keep the ship better informed.) (4) Fire may be requested "immediately" or at some specific future time. For an initial mission the ship may require three minutes or more to get off its first rounds.

Adjustment is usually by 2-gun salvos. This varies somewhat from ship to ship. At the instant of firing the ship sends "Salvo." Then, calculating the time of flight and deducting slightly for transmission, "Splash" is sent to correspond with the burst.

Orders are sent the ship by the Spotter, *not sensings*. Range comes first ("Up" or "Down" so many yards), then "Right" or "Left" so many yards. For time fire the command is (to throw in what amounts to extra site) "Raise burst" so many feet. To move the burst in or out along the trajectory the commands are "Fuze range in" or "Fuze range out" so many yards. The range command and the deflection command must appear for each spot. Thus "No change, right 100" would call for another salvo at the same range 100 yards to the right. "Up 100, no change" would increase range and leave deflection the same. The ship in its initial laying by map normally takes account of site, although the observer may help (especially if the map is not too good) by giving "Elevation [so many] feet" as part of his target description.

When on the target, fire for effect may be given as "No change, no change, maximum rate 2 minutes," "One volley per minute for 10 minutes," or any similar command which may be appropriate. In fire for effect a destroyer will fire volleys from its five or six 5" guns, as the case may be. "Maximum rate" is construed by the ship to mean 10 rounds per minute.

An open sheaf is not normally used, the ship's fire control apparatus being set for all of its guns to converge at the range fired. A wide front may be covered by giving "no change" for range followed by deflection shifts.

In practice a reasonable latitude in the form of commands is found. For instance, "Give me 25 rounds spread along the road from ——— to ———. Cannot adjust. Commence firing immediately" would get satisfactory results from one's ship. Also, if the target is visible to seaward, instructions may be given for the ship to take it under direct fire doing its own spotting.

At the end of a mission the command might be "Cease firing. Mission successful" (or "You knocked the hell out of that emplacement. Good work!"). At this the ship would cease fire and would cease tracking the target with its guns. If you wish a cessation of fire but wish to have the ship continue to keep its guns aimed at the target the command is "Check fire." The latter may be followed by a command to resume fire or by "New target, Up 600, Right 200, Commence firing immediately" if a new target in the vicinity appears. A ship cannot track a target indefinitely, so unless a resumption of fire in the vicinity is expected very soon, "cease firing" should be given. After this command firing can only be resumed by "Target at" and new coordinates.